



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO MARK THE FUNERAL OF THE PATRIARCH GREGORY PETER XX,
LEADER OF THE ARMENIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

To His Excellency

Msgr. Boutros Marayati

Administrator of the Patriarchal Church of Cilicia of the Armenians

I have learned the news of the return to the Father's house of our beloved brother in Christ, His Beatitude Gregory Peter XX GHABROYAN, Patriarch of Cilicia of the Armenians.

I remember well that when he was elected, in the summer of 2015, before accepting he wanted to ask me for a special blessing, to be able to lead the Patriarchal Church despite his advanced age.

We met on several further occasions. On 7 September 2015 we concelebrated the Eucharist in Rome, in which the *Ecclesiastica Communio* was signified: we held high the Body and Blood of Christ, a visible sign that the foundation of all service in the Church is adherence and conformation to Christ, Crucified and Risen. In 2016 he was with me during the Apostolic Journey to Armenia, particularly when I visited the Cathedral of the Ordinariate for the Armenian Catholic Faithful in Eastern Europe, in Gyumri, and together with my brother bishops of the Synod of the Patriarchal Church. In 2018, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Statue of Saint Gregory of Narek, in the Vatican Gardens. So many special moments, which allowed me to be close to Patriarch Gregory Peter XX and, with him, to the beloved Armenian people, who have suffered so much throughout history but have always remained faithful to their profession of faith in Christ the Saviour.

During these years, as a caring Pastor, His Beatitude presided over the Patriarchal Church of Cilicia of the Armenians, establishing contacts with various civil and ecclesiastical institutions, so that a number of initiatives of solidarity with the most tried populations, especially in Syria and Lebanon, could be supported. In particular, he took to heart the opening of the process of

beatification and canonisation of his enlightened predecessor, the servant of God Cardinal Gregory Peter XV Agagianian.

In the last period of his earthly pilgrimage, he faced with dignity the progressive loss of physical strength, and with a sense of responsibility he asked himself in conscience whether he was still able to lead the Armenian Church as Patriarch: the Lord answered him, issuing one last time the call to follow Him.

We commend the soul of this our brother to the Mercy of God, to whose throne, we are sure, he is accompanied by the intercessory prayers of the Mother of God Mary Most Holy, of Saint Gregory the Illuminator and of Saint Gregory of Narek, together with all the Armenian martyrs and saints.

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